

Message Text

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70

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CAB-09 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 FAA-00 PA-03 PRS-01 SPC-03 NSC-10

PM-07 L-03 NEA-10 TRSE-00 MBFR-04 SAJ-01 ACDA-19

DRC-01 /119 W

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R 101710Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4032

INFO USIA WASHDC

SECDEF

USMISSION NATO

COMICEDEFOR

CINCLANT

UNCLAS REYKJAVIK 1195

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJ: CROSSWIND RUNWAY PRAISED AT OPENING CEREMONY

SUMMARY: THE U.S. - BUILT CROSSWIND RUNWAY EXTENSION AT KEFLAVIK AIRPORT WAS FORMALLY OPENED OCT 9. THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS, THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTRY, THE AMBASSADOR, COMICEDEFOR AND OTHER DIGNITARIES ATTENDED. EXTENSION'S IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO ICELANDIC AVIATION PRAISED. CONSIDERABLE PUBLICITY GENERATED. END SUMMARY.

COMICEDEFOR OCT 9 WAS HOST TO A CEREMONY AT KEFLAVIK AIRPORT FORMALLY OPENING THE US-FINANCED EXTENSION OF THE AIRPORT'S CROSSWIND RUNWAY. DIGNITARIES WHO ATTENDED INCLUDED MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS BJORN JONSSON, SECRETARY-GENERAL PETUR THORSTEINSSON (REPRESENTING THE FOREIGN MINISTER), THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ICELANDIC AERONAUTICS BOARD, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ICELANDIC DEFENCE COUNCIL, THE ICELANDIC CONTRACTOR, THE PRESIDENTS RESPECTIVELY OF THE ICELANDIC ASSOC-
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IATIONS OF PILOTS, STEWARDESSES AND GROUND PERSONNEL, ICELANDIC

AIRLINES AND ICELAND AIR LINES EXECUTIVES AND OTHERS.

THE EXTENSION'S IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO ICELANDIC AVIATION WAS PRAISED BY ALL ICELANDIC SPEAKERS. IN INTERVIEWS WITH MORGUNBLADID AND TELEVISION, MINISTER JONSSON SAID THE CEREMONY MARKED A GREAT DAY IN THE HISTORY OF ICELANDIC AVIATION AND OF THE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF AERONAUTICS, AGNAR KOFOED-HANSEN, PARTICULARLY PRAISED THE U.S. CONTRIBUTION. HE SAID "ONE MAN MORE THAN ANY OTHER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS EXTENSION. CHAIRMAN MENDEL RIVERS, WHO TRAGICALLY DIED A FEW DAYS AFTER SEEING THIS APPROPRIATION THROUGH CONGRESS, WOULD BE HERE WITH US TODAY WERE HE LIVING." THE PRESIDENT OF THE AIRLINE PILOTS ASSOCIATION SAID THE EXTENSION, WHEN ALL ELECTRONIC AIDS ARE INSTALLED, WILL MAKE KEFLAVIK ONE OF THE WORLD'S BEST AIRPORTS. THE AIRPORT MANAGER IN INTERVIEWS POINTED OUT, AS DID THE MINISTER, THAT, PREVIOUS TO THE EXTENSION, 16 PERCENT OF LARGE PASSENGER JETS PLANNING TO LAND AT KEFLAVIK HAD BEEN REQUIRED TO FLY OVER BECAUSE OF WEATHER CONDITIONS. LESS THAN ONE PERCENT NOW WILL BE REQUIRED TO FLY OVER. BOTH CITED CONSEQUENT GAINS OF CONVENIENCE AND INCOME.

MEDIA COVERAGE WAS EXTENSIVE. TELEVISION HAD EIGHT MINUTES, RADIO SOMEWHAT LESS. STORY WAS PAGE ONE IN MORGUNBLADID, TIMINN AND ALTHYDUBLADID. IT WAS IGNORED BY PEOPLES ALLIANCE'S THJODVILJINN.

IN A TV INTERVIEW, MINISTER JONSSON WAS ASKED A QUESTION WHICH POINTED OUT THAT "MANY WILL WANT TO ASSOCIATE THE OPENING OF THE RUNWAY WITH THE STATUS OF THE BASE." JONSSON SAID HE SAW NO CONNECTION. WHEN CONGRESS HAD CONSIDERED THE BILL, HE SAID, THERE HAD BEEN TALK OF REQUIRING THAT THE BASE'S FUTURE BE SECURED BEFORE THE RUNWAY WAS FINANCED. BUT THAT PROVISION HAD NOT BEEN WRITTEN INTO THE LEGISLATION.

CEREMONY WAS PARTICULARLY WELL PLANNED AND EXECUTED BY COMICEDEFOR STAFF. THE ATTENDANCE AND PRAISE REPRESENTED SOMETHING OF A TURNAROUND. THE ICELANDIC GOVERNMENT HAD ORIGINALLY INFORMED THE IDF THAT IT WOULD TAKE NO ROLE IN PUBLICIZING EXTENSION'S OPENING. THE PLANNING OF THE CEREMONY WAS
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MONEY, ALONG WITH THE AMBASSADOR'S INVITATIONS TO THE TWO MINISTERS, RESULTED IN CONSIDERABLY MORE INVOLVEMENT, ATTENTION AND THANKS, THAN SOME HAD EVIDENTLY INTENDED.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AIRPORTS, RUNWAYS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 OCT 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973REYKJA01195
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: REYKJAVIK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731041/aaaabdss.tel
Line Count: 111
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: martinjw
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12-Sep-2001 by phillir0>; RELEASED <24-Jan-2002 by martinjw>; APPROVED <25-Jan-2002 by martinjw>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CROSSWIND RUNWAY PRAISED AT OPENING CEREMONY SUMMARY: THE U.S. - BUILT CROSSWIND RUNWAY EXTENSION
TAGS: ETRN, IC
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005